



Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen  
Institute for Human Sciences

*IWM Lectures in Human Sciences 2012*

**Peter Brown**

**“For the Ransom of the Soul”**

**Wealth, Death and the Afterlife from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages**

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**Eintritt frei, in englischer Sprache, Anmeldung unter [events@iwm.at](mailto:events@iwm.at) erbeten.**

**Mo., 15 October, 6:00pm**

**Lecture I:**

**“Treasure in Heaven” and Memory of the Dead in Early Christianity**

This lecture will deal with the notion of “treasure in heaven”, especially in relation to the memory of the dead. It will compare the late third century inscriptions at the catacomb of San Sebastiano (and the ceremonies to which they referred) with Christian practices documented and discussed in newly available Manichaean writings of the same period. From Rome to the extreme eastern regions of the Christian world, similar rituals related to the memory of the dead and the protection of their souls in the afterlife provoked similar questioning. It is many of these questions which Saint Augustine will address, a century later, in Africa.

**Tu., 16 October, 6:00pm**

**Lecture II:**

**“Forgive us our sins.”**

**Alms, expiation and the afterlife in the Africa of Saint Augustine**

This lecture will be set in North Africa in the age of Saint Augustine (354-430). It will deal with the change in the social imagination of the Roman world, by which the poor emerged as the primary objects of Christian giving. This involved the eclipse of the previous, civic model on which the classical tradition of civic euergetism had been based. Giving to the poor was held to expiate sins. Augustine’s controversy with Pelagius and his upper-class Roman supporters led him to stress the need for constant expiation as the essence of the Christian life. This meant that giving (to the poor and to the church) “for the remission of sins” was to be a permanent feature of

the life of the churches. Spectacular renunciations and the endowment of churches and monasteries by the very rich (a Christian avatar of the classical tradition of euergetism) meant less to him than did regular giving in which all classes were involved. As a result, Augustine viewed with the greatest distrust any views of the afterlife that threatened to weaken the sense of the urgent need for penance in this life.

**Th., 16 October, 6:00pm**

**Lecture III:**

**“Who cease to think about the Last Judgment.”**

**Penance and the Other World from Salvian to Columbanus**

This lecture will be set in Gaul in the fifth and sixth centuries. It will deal with the sharpened sense of the immediate presence of Heaven and Hell that was generated in the monastic environment of Lérins, and that was disseminated by preachers of penance connected with Lérins. This preaching had a marked social aspect: society as a whole was called to order in the last days of Roman rule. Gregory, bishop of Tours (538 – 594) carried this tradition into the age of the Merovingian Frankish kingdoms. Gregory’s attitude was notable for his insistence on the immediacy of the Last Judgment and on the vengeance of God and His saints in the here and now. His otherworld was intimately linked to this world. This was because of a program for the reform of society to which he remained loyal. The replacement of this vision of society by the more sharply otherworldly orientation of the great monasteries connected with Columbanus, that were patronized by the kings, the queens and the new aristocracy of Francia, marks a decisive step away from the ancient world to a piety and world view that looks directly towards the Middle Ages.

**Peter Brown**, Philip and Beulah Rollins Professor of History, Emeritus at Princeton University; Professor Brown is credited with having created the field of study referred to as late antiquity (250-800 A.D.); the period during which Rome fell, the three major monotheistic religions took shape, and Christianity spread across Europe. A native of Ireland, Professor Brown earned his B.A. in history from Oxford University (1956), where he taught until 1975 as a Fellow of All Souls College. He joined the Princeton faculty in 1986 after teaching at the University of London and the University of California, Berkeley. Professor Brown’s primary interests are the transition from antiquity to the Middle Ages and the rise of Christianity, and he has pursued them through investigations into such diverse topics as Roman rhetoric, the cult of the saints, the body and sexuality, and wealth and poverty. He is currently working on the problems of wealth, poverty, and care of the poor in late antiquity and early medieval periods.

**Peter Brown’s numerous published works include:**

*Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire*, Hanover: University Press of New England, 2002.

*The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, 200-1000 A.D.*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1996/2002.

*The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150–750*, London/ New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1971/1989.

*Augustine of Hippo. A Biography*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967/2000.